Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Bureau du commissaire aux conflits d'intérêts

Three-Year Business Plan 2016/17 – 2018/19

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Mandate 2

- Legislative Background 2
- Governance and Accountability 3

Environmental Scan 3

- External Factors 3
- Internal Factors 5

Strategic Directions 5

Overview of Current and Future Activities 7

Resources Needed to Meet Goals and Objectives 11

- Financial 11
- Human Resources 13

Risk Assessment & Mitigation Strategies 13

Information Technology Plan 16

Initiatives Involving Third Parties 17

Performance Measures 17

Communication Plan 18

Executive Summary

The Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner (COIC) ensures that the mandate of the commissioner, as set out in the *Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006* (PSOA) and *Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009 (ATAGAA),* is implemented and that the necessary supporting administrative structures and procedures are in place, in keeping with the Agencies and Appointments Directive.

In addition to providing advice and making determinations on specific conflict of interest and political activity matters, the COIC assists other designated ethics executives in carrying out their responsibilities, contributes to organizational best practices and procedures to minimize the risk that situations of concern will arise and, more generally, raises public servants' awareness of their ethical obligations when carrying out their duties to the Crown.

The common element to all the COIC's activities is a focus on education. This focus supports the underlying principle of the Ontario government's ethical framework, which requires public servants to be knowledgeable about what activities may give rise to a conflict of interest or may be restricted, and to disclose situations of concern to their ethics executive. The focus on education also supports the principles of good governance and accountability as it aids decision-makers in carrying out their oversight responsibilities. Finally, a sound appreciation of the standards of conduct expected of Ontario's public servants alleviates reliance on the COIC as a single or only resource, thereby better enabling the office to fulfill the role the government expects of it with its limited resources.

In that regard, during the planning period, 2016/17 – 2018/19, the COIC will be taking several steps to improve the efficiency of its operations. The commissioner is committed to creating a leading-edge, paperless office and is currently working with the Archivist of Ontario to confirm that our records management procedures and practices in going paperless meet the requirements of the *Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006*. The COIC will also upgrade and enhance its case management database in order to automate several business functions that are currently manual processes and to optimize the use of technology.

The COIC will continue to work with the Public Service Commission to implement the financial declarations process for senior public servants and, as necessary, support any proposed review of the regulation to clarify the issues of regulation interpretation, particularly as they apply to public bodies.

The COIC will continue to assign priority to education and awareness, with the objective of building capacity among ethics executives in public bodies in particular, and among public servants generally. In this regard, the commissioner authors a periodic blog to educate public servants on current and important conflict of interest and political activity issues. In addition, the COIC will take the lead, in partnership with other ethics organizations and academic institutions, to plan and host a major conference on public sector ethics for the fall of 2016. We will also revamp our orientation session for newly appointed and reappointed ethics executives, launch an outreach program for small agencies (less than 50 employees) and create new training videos to explain conflict of interest and political activity rules to a wider audience of public servants.

With the benefit of nine years' experience, the COIC is now in a better position to articulate the desired outcomes of its activities, act as a resource and provide support to other areas of government. For example, beyond serving as Conflict of Interest Advisor to the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets, the COIC will provide expert advice and input to support the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's review of *the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*.

It should be noted that the appointment term of the current commissioner ends during the three-year planning period. However, the culmination of the activities planned during the planning period will ensure that the COIC is better positioned to impact the culture of ethics in the public service of Ontario and beyond.

Mandate

Legislative Background

The PSOA was proclaimed in August 2007. In enacting this legislation, the government intended to strengthen the ethical and accountability framework governing the public service of Ontario.

The intent of the *PSOA* is to achieve greater consistency in the application of conflict of interest and political activity rules throughout the public service. The legislation also clarifies lines of accountability in applying these rules, thereby contributing to transparency and understanding, within and outside government, with regard to conflict of interest, political activity and related best practices. Among other things, the *PSOA* creates the role of ethics executive, essentially a senior designated official in each organization, and provides for the appointment of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

The PSOA assigns the commissioner a leadership role in contributing to public servants' understanding and interpretation of the conflict of interest and political

activity rules. As well, the *PSOA* explicitly assigns the commissioner responsibility for certain conflict of interest and political activity matters with respect to employees of ministries and employees and appointees of public bodies.

In April 2010, with the proclamation of the *Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009* (ATAGAA), the commissioner was assigned responsibility for the approval of tribunals' ethics plans. The objective of these plans is to ensure that tribunal board members are familiar with their ethical requirements. The ethical requirements are set out in Parts IV (Conflict of Interest) and V (Political Activity) of the *PSOA* and in the code of conduct that is part of the member accountability framework.

Governance and Accountability

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council for a fixed term. The commissioner is accountable to the President of Treasury Board for fulfilling the mandate prescribed in the PSOA and is required to report to the minister annually on the activities of the office during the preceding year. However, with respect to the commissioner's procedural and statutory decision-making, the commissioner is, and must be seen to be, independent and impartial.

The COIC is a classified agency (regulatory) under the Agency and Appointments Directive and all Management Board of Cabinet, Public Service Commission and Ministry of Finance directives and guidelines apply to COIC's operations. A memorandum of understanding between the President of Treasury Board and the COIC sets out additional reporting and other responsibilities related to the management, administration, and operation of the office.

Environmental Scan

During the planning period 2016/17 to 2018/19, several external and internal factors may influence the COIC's operations.

External Factors

The commissioner's sphere of responsibility is limited to public servants who work in ministries and who work in or are appointed to public bodies. Nonetheless, trends, developments and issues, external to this immediate sphere of responsibility, may impact on the COIC.

Interest in public sector ethics: Growing and more vocal public interest in, and concern about, the conduct of government officials at all levels, elected and non-elected, heightens attention paid to Ontario government's appointment and employment decisions and to Ontario public servants' conduct while undertaking their duties. Greater scrutiny of public servants' conduct may impact the volume of matters about which the commissioner's advice or direction is sought. Similarly, as society's interest in issues regarding ethical conduct grows and findings of municipal and provincial Integrity Commissioners on infractions by elected officials are reported in the media, the commissioner anticipates that he may be required to play a more prominent leadership role in contributing and influencing the dialogue in a positive way. As a result, expectations may increase for information on the COIC website, including the COIC blog, to be current and relevant.

Transparency: There has been growing public demand for greater transparency of decisions in various sectors. For example, there are calls for disciplinary decisions related to breach of trust and prohibited conduct made by regulatory bodies that oversee such professionals as judges, justices of the peace and medical practitioners, to be made public. Such decisions were previously shielded from public scrutiny because of privacy and confidentiality considerations and were only made public under very strict circumstances. In addition, the government's open government initiative, underpinned by the *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014*, requires public sector organizations to embrace greater accountability and transparency. These trends could impact the COIC's operations. For example, the commissioner is not required to make his advice and determinations public and the office only releases, through its annual report, anonymized summaries of key cases dealt with in the previous year. In an environment where there is an increased focus on transparency and intense public interest in how ethical breaches in the public service are addressed, this could mean that the COIC may be called upon to publicly release information relating to specific cases, and this could influence the way the COIC operates.

Term Limits of OIC appointments: As the government implements the 10-year term limit for OIC appointments, some public bodies, boards and tribunals expect to experience a 50% turnover of members in the next two to three years. Although the commissioner's education program is targeted at chairs and other designated ethics executives, the turnover rate is expected to increase the demand and requirement for the COIC to deliver education and training to these new members on their PSOA responsibilities.

Internal Factors

The commissioner, appointed by Order-in-Council, is currently supported by 4 FTEs: an executive director, legal counsel, a senior policy advisor and an office co-ordinator (one of the four FTEs is assigned to MAG as seconded legal services). The term of the current commissioner's OIC appointment ends during the planning period, July 2017.

Expanded role: In the recent past, the commissioner has supported the government's initiative to extract economic value from public assets by assuming the new role of Conflict of Interest Advisor to the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets. The commissioner has also been called upon by Cabinet Office and some Minister's Offices to screen potential appointees for potential conflict of interest concerns. In the case of the latter role, the COIC and the Office of the Integrity Commissioner have renewed their memorandum of understanding to clarify the conditions under which each office will take the lead to review potential government appointees for conflict of interest concerns. As the reputation and value proposition that the COIC offers is better understood and appreciated across government, this may result in additional demands for COIC involvement in other government initiatives. These demands, if realized, will have to be balanced against the COIC's capacity to deliver.

Mandate review recommendations: The recently completed (March 2015) mandate review of the COIC's office included recommendations around performance monitoring (e.g. following-up on advice and determinations). If implemented as envisioned, this may have resource implications for the COIC.

Budget constraints: Any decreases to the current COIC budget might impact its ability to deliver on core operational priorities beyond the basics of managing its case load. If that is to occur, activities related to education and outreach and awareness campaigns in support of creating a "culture of ethics" may need to be curtailed.

Strategic Directions

For the current planning period, the COIC intends to focus on a number of strategies to support its mandate and to further its goals. These strategies rest within the legislated mandate of the COIC, take into account both anticipated internal and external influences, constraints and assumptions, as described in the environmental scan above, as well as lessons learned in the eight years since the office was established.

1. **Improving consistency & application of the PSOA**
   The COIC will continue to work with TBS to address gaps identified in the PSOA, particularly the application and interpretation of the PSOA relating to public bodies, given their peculiar circumstances, for example, the application of the financial declaration requirement to public bodies.

2. **Building ethics executives' capacity & contributing to general understanding**
   The *PSOA* introduced a decentralized regime of ethics executives, giving specified individuals within public service organizations a role to promote ethical conduct within their organizations. The *PSOA* also places the onus on public servants to raise conflict of interest and political activity matters of concern with their ethics executive.

   In view of the combination of these expectations, the operational constraints under which the office must function and the leadership role envisioned for the commissioner, the COIC will continue to assign priority to education and awareness, with the objective of building and leveraging the capacity of ethics executives in public bodies and among public servants, more generally. This effort will also address gaps in support available to public bodies (particularly small public bodies with less than 50 employees that lack the resources and capacity to effectively train and support staff). Building the capacity of local ethics executives ultimately reduces reliance on the COIC to provide basic information/respond to routine inquiries while creating room to address more complex and systemic issues.

3. **Measuring effectiveness**
   Measuring the efficacy of an ethics agency is not an easy feat. The functions of this office go beyond easily quantifiable performance indicators. During the planning period, the COIC will continue to implement and fine tune the performance measurement framework it has put in place for assessing outcomes and impact of services on an ongoing basis.

4. **Extending influence through partnerships and sharing of best practices**
   Given its small budget and limited resources the COIC will focus on achieving its mandate of promoting a culture of ethics by partnering with other organizations with similar mandates in order to reach a wider audience and have a greater impact. For example, the COIC will support the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in its review of the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, in which the Ontario ethical model could be offered

as a best practice to the municipal sector. The COIC will also partner with other levels of government, academic institutions and other ethics agencies to plan and host a major conference on public sector ethics for the fall of 2016. The conference will have the potential to attract major thinkers and practitioners in the field of public sector ethics, result in a publication of important papers on the topic and propel Ontario into a key leadership position among Canadian, and possibly international, jurisdictions for learning about best practices in public sector ethics.

Overview of Current and Future Activities

The vision of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is to help create "a province where people trust government". The activities and actions undertaken by the organization are intended to achieve that vision.

It is recognized that the COIC alone cannot achieve that vision, but in partnership with other public sector institutions, we play an important role to:

- Contribute to public servants' understanding of, and compliance with, ethics rules
- Encourage excellence and consistency in the application of ethics rules
- Be a leader in promoting ethical conduct

The office's ability to carry out these roles requires that appropriate organizational capacity exist and/or be built.

1. Contribute to public servants' understanding of, and compliance with, ethics rules

Acts as ethics executive

The commissioner is the ethics executive for certain public servants and former public servants. In this capacity, the commissioner is responsible for providing these individuals with advice or direction on specific in-service and post-service activities or concerns, including political activities that may have an impact on their ability to fulfill their duties as public servants.

- The COIC will continue to provide well-researched and reasoned advice and determinations. The commissioner has an exemplary record of success in fulfilling this mandated role. Of the almost 1,300 matters the commissioner has dealt with since the office's inception, not a single case has been judicially reviewed. This record is a positive reflection on the clarity and

transparency of the COIC's processes and the quality and soundness of the advice and determinations provided.

Assists other ethics executives and/or government offices

Ethics executives are individuals to whom the *PSOA* assigns responsibility to promote ethical conduct within their organization. These individuals may seek the commissioner's advice on conflict of interest or political activity matters involving public servants in their organizations or they may seek to refer matters to the commissioner for a determination.

- The COIC will continue to build the capacity of other ethics executives by delivering 'group' orientation sessions for newly-appointed and re-appointed chairs of public bodies, other designated executives and their senior staff. Given the constraints on financial resources, the continued use of webcast technology to improve accessibility and broaden access to these sessions by making them available to geographically distant participants in real-time may need to be reconsidered. The group session approach will advance the government's interest in establishing a 'community of practice' among ethics executives, promote a collaborative approach with the Integrity Commissioner, and help the COIC to realize efficiencies given limited COIC resources.

- The COIC will implement an outreach agenda targeted at small public bodies, defined as public bodies with less than 50 employees. These smaller and often remotely located agencies have the most to gain from this focused attention as they often do not have the infrastructure or access to centralized resources to support staff in dealing with ethical dilemmas. A targeted outreach program by the COIC is intended to address this deficiency.

Advises on financial declarations of certain public servants

Under the PSOA Regulation 381/07, identified public servants in ministries who routinely work on matters that might involve the private sector are required to make a financial declaration to the commissioner. The commissioner will review and, as necessary, provide a letter of advice and/or alert the ministry/public body ethics executive of potential conflicts.

- There is uncertainty as to whether Regulation 381/07 applies to public servants who work in public bodies since the regulation specifically refers to "public servants who work in ministries". The COIC is prepared to work with TBS to review and/or clarify the interpretation and application of Regulation 381/07 as it pertains to public servants working in public bodies.

Considers political activity requests

The *PSOA* sets out political activity rights and restrictions for all public servants. Public servants may seek permission from their ethics executive to participate in some activities that are otherwise not expressly permitted. Some public servants must seek the commissioner's permission to participate in activities that are otherwise prohibited under the *PSOA*.

- The COIC will continue to seek opportunities to work with the Public Appointments Secretariat to identify and introduce means to raise candidates' awareness, *prior* to appointment, and upon the completion of their term of appointment, of their *PSOA* obligations.

2. Encourage excellence and consistency in the application of ethics rules

Serves as a best practice resource

In addition to developing a body of knowledge and experience in Ontario, the commissioner makes it a priority to learn about methods and approaches used by other offices with comparable responsibilities, in other jurisdictions within and outside Ontario. This assists the commissioner in providing information and advice on best practices that support the intent of the *PSOA*.

- The COIC will continue to participate actively in the Council of Government Ethics Laws (COGEL), to obtain (and share) information on trends and best practices in ethics oversight.

- The COIC will offer its knowledge and experience to local governments through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as it updates the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

Identifies organizational policies and practices of concern or potential concern

The commissioner may advise public bodies or other entities on organizational policies or practices that, if adopted, could minimize the risk that conflict situations will arise or may suggest modifying existing policies, practices or procedures to ensure they are aligned with the PSOA.

The commissioner is also required to review and approve adjudicative tribunals' ethics plans in accordance with ATAGAA.

3. Be a leader in promoting ethical conduct

Shares knowledge and experience

Each year, the commissioner's annual report includes a selected summary of conflict of interest and political activity matters addressed during the year. These summaries, which are also posted on the COIC's website, are intended to assist Ontario public servants to consistently interpret and apply the conflict of interest and political activity rules in similar situations.

- The commissioner will use his periodic online blog to share his thoughts, expertise and insights on current and emerging ethical issues for the benefit of the broader ethics community. The COIC also hosts periodic lunch and learns at its offices in which local experts (academics and practitioners) are invited to share their knowledge and experiences with COIC staff in an informal setting.

Identifies and responds to education opportunities

The commissioner assists public servants in increasing their understanding of the rules and their roles and responsibilities under the *PSOA*. This is particularly important for public servants in public bodies who are subject to the same rules as ministry employees, but who don't always have access to training and information available within ministries.

- The COIC will accommodate the OPS' and public bodies' requests for orientation to the *PSOA* on a limited basis as resources permit (e.g., presentations to newly appointed deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and board appointees).

- The COIC will partner with TBS and other interested parties (e.g. the Ministry of Training , Colleges and Universities) to produce a number of new training videos that explain the conflict of interest and political activity rules through engaging, easy to understand and informative vignettes.

- The COIC will maximize the impact of its redesigned website as a primary means of engaging with its key stakeholders by posting instructional videos, linking to current news items and hosting a regular blog by the commissioner that would further the objective of building the capacity of decision makers and raising general awareness.

- The COIC will partner with other levels of government, academic institutions and ethics agencies with similar mandates to plan and host a major conference on public sector ethics for the fall of 2016. The topics to be addressed in this conference will highlight best practices and be of interest to, and meet the education and awareness requirements for ethics executives and other public servants with respect to current and controversial issues in such areas as conflicts of interest, political activity and financial declarations.

4. Building organizational capacity

The commissioner has devoted considerable attention to defining the scope of his responsibilities as set out in the *PSOA* and to developing the procedures and tools for carrying out those responsibilities. These are continually assessed in light of accumulated experience and practical application. Ongoing review helps ensure that the office continues to serve as a useful resource for Ontario public servants and others and maximizes the capacity of this small office. Best practices (e.g. procedural, administrative, etc.) and training and development opportunities are monitored for relevance and application. During the planning period, the COIC will:

- Fully implement its performance measurement framework by reporting annually, through its Annual Report, on its performance against the established 2013-14 baseline data in the areas of efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction.

- Transform its paper-based records management system into a digitized, paperless system consistent with the *Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006*. This will propel the COIC to be among the first organizations in Ontario's agency sector to be fully paperless.

- Host two to three lunch and learns annually, with leading experts (practitioners and academics) to benefit from an exchange of ideas/experiences and while enhancing the capacity of staff

Resources Needed to Meet Goals and Objectives

The ability of the COIC to deliver on its mandate and undertake the activities described above will depend on financial and human resources provided by TBS.

Financial

The COIC's annual appropriations reflects the fact that counsel's salary (seconded legal services), benefits and professional fees are charged against the Services standard account, not Salaries and Wages. The COIC's annual appropriations also include a lower than normal salary for the role of the commissioner. The current commissioner's compensation was adjusted to reflect his pension income after his November 2013 retirement from the Ontario Court of Justice. This level of salary is not expected to continue after the expiration of the current Commissioner's term in July 2017. An anticipated salary increase for the subsequent commissioner will be a pressure on a flat-lined budget in the out-years.

The out-year expenditure allocations are flat over the planning period. A large portion of the COIC's budget (approximately 60%) is dedicated to mandatory, non-discretionary operating requirements for which costs are increasing (e.g., salaries and wages, lease charges, legal costs, IT support, French translation). In addition, there are new pressures including enhancements to, and maintenance of, the case management database that require resources to complete. As a result, the COIC has little flexibility to respond to any higher, unanticipated costs or competing demands that may occur and must therefore look for innovative ways to manage its limited resources to support public servants in meeting their ethical obligations.

Continued and growing government-wide financial and staffing resource constraints will require the COIC to carefully monitor its capacity to respond to its case load and to new responsibilities and increasing expectations.

Actual and Allocations, Fiscal Years 2015/16 to 2018/19

Standard Account	2015-16 Allocation	2016-17 Allocation	2017-18 Allocation	2018-19 Allocation
Salaries & Wages	482,700	482,700	482,700	482,700
Benefits	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000
Transportation & Communication	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000
Services (including Counsel's Salary)	281,800	281,800	281,800	281,800
Supplies & Equipment	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Total	857,500	857,500	857,500	857,500

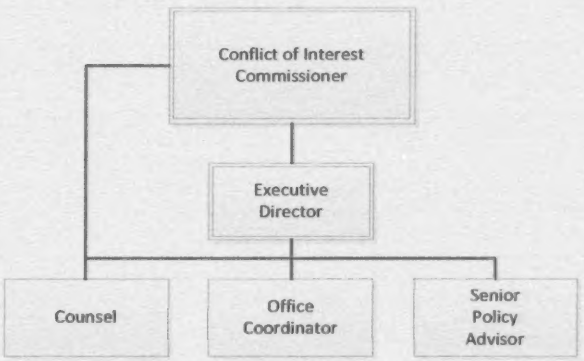
Human Resources

The commissioner is supported by 4 FTEs – an executive director, a senior policy advisor, an office coordinator and legal counsel. Legal counsel is seconded from the Ministry of the Attorney General and is not counted as an FTE of the COIC. With this staff complement, the COIC delivers on its responsibilities in the areas of case management, research, policy analysis and performance measurement and reporting.

During the planning period, this staff complement is not expected to change. When project-specific assistance is required, temporary help will be acquired either through the vendor of record procurement process or through arrangements with academic institutions with practicum or internship programs.

Organizational Chart

Office of the Commissioner of Conflict of Interest



Risk Assessment & Mitigation Strategies

A number of internal and external factors were identified in earlier sections that could potentially have an impact on the COIC's ability to deliver on its mandate efficiently and effectively. The table below presents the potential risks to COIC operations in this environment and the mitigation strategies the COIC has, and will, put in place to address those risks.

Potential Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Pressure to publicly report on individual COIC decisions.	*Low to Medium*: Given the heightened public and media sensitivity for organizations to be transparent about how ethical breaches, real and apparent, are addressed when there is a public interest, it will not be inconceivable for a similar request to be made to the COIC to make public the commissioner's advice or determination on a specific matter. *Mitigation Strategy:* The COIC's internal processes for case management, research and factors considered in providing advice or making determinations are well documented (in writing). These are supported by fact sheets and decision trees that are publicly available on the COIC website. In addition, the commissioner's final letters clearly state the factors the commissioner considered in each case and how he arrived at his conclusion. Should there be pressure to publicly release any documents pertaining to a specific matter dealt with by the commissioner, the COIC would make such a determination based on an assessment of the requirements in Section 3 of *O. Reg. 384/07* and the requirements of *FIPPA*.
It is not unusual for an OIC appointment to end prior to the appointment of a new appointee. Since there is no natural successor built into the COIC's organizational plan (for example, a deputy commissioner) to assume the role of the commissioner should the commissioner's term end in July 2017 before a new commissioner is appointed, this becomes an organizational risk.	*Low to Medium:* Given the nature of the OIC appointment and the organizational structure (i.e. no duplicate appointment for the same position at the same time) any delay in appointing a replacement commissioner would present a real and significant transition risk. *Mitigation Strategy*: Beginning one-year in advance, the COIC will inform the Minister and ministry staff of the OIC's end date and the need to identify potential successors in order to allow for a smooth transition.

Potential Risks	Mitigation Strategies
With the expiration of the current commissioner's term on July 28, 2017, a newly appointed commissioner could potentially adopt a different view of the COIC's operations and priority projects for the remainder of the planning period.	*Low:* The COIC operations reflect best practices in administration and case management that are specifically aligned to a strict interpretation of the COIC mandate. While it is likely that a newly appointed commissioner could bring a different perspective and approach to how the OCOIC does its business, such changes would likely have minimal impact since proposed deviations must still be consistent with the COIC's statutory mandate and obligations. *Mitigation Strategy:* Ensure that proposed operational changes are supported by a strong business rationale and aligned with the COIC's statutory authority and obligations.
Requests for the COIC to assume an expanded role or to begin to implement aspects of its mandate that have not been exercised.	*Low to Medium*: There have been very few instances when the commissioner has been requested to assume an expanded role (most recent examples include the role to support the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets and screening of potential appointees to advisory boards) that could not be accommodated within the COIC's existing operations. However, there are areas of the COIC's existing mandate that have not been exercised before - such as reviewing financial declarations from public servants working in public bodies or providing post-service advice to large numbers of former public servants who worked in public bodies - that could become burdensome if they become government priorities and activities should ramp up. *Mitigation Strategy:* Any future request for the COIC to take on new activities or to reallocate resources to responsibilities within its current mandate that have become priorities, will be assessed against, and be contingent upon, the

Potential Risks	Mitigation Strategies
	office's resource capacity to deliver and the clear alignment of the request with the COIC's legislated mandate.
Requirement for COIC to find additional savings to contribute to the TBS' annual savings target.	*Low to Medium*: The COIC may be required to provide savings on its annual allocation. Given that the majority of the COIC budget is comprised of non-discretionary expenditures that do not leave much flexibility to fund core programs/ activities, contributing to additional savings targets would be difficult. *Mitigation Strategy*: If necessary, the COIC will identify core programs and activities that could be curtailed or for which partnerships with others could supplement (e.g. education and outreach) so that funds could be found to contribute to additional savings.

Information Technology Plan

The COIC launched a redesigned website in June, 2014. This website is more modern, intuitive and current. The content for this site is maintained by in-house COIC staff with back-end technical support provided by the Central Agencies Cluster.

The COIC case management system is quite robust and can be a powerful tool to accomplish a number of related operational tasks. For example, in addition to the regular basic case management function, new functionality has been added to allow the office to track organizational best practices, complexity of cases, attendance at orientation sessions, etc. Additional fixes and enhancements are required. This database was developed on an Access platform by an external vendor who has had a long term contract to provide updates and ongoing maintenance. A new three-year contract for enhancements and ongoing maintenance has been awarded that will expire at the end of the planning period (March 2018).

Initiatives Involving Third Parties

While the COIC does not partner with institutions outside the Ontario government to deliver its mandate and/or undertake its activities, it regularly seeks to collaborate with other Ontario government offices/agencies. These efforts stem not only from the COIC's desire to minimize duplication of effort and/or eliminate gaps in the interpretation and application of the PSOA but from the limited capacity to achieve these objectives with a small office.

For example, the COIC will:

- partner with Human Resource Policy and Planning Branch, TBS and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to produce training videos on conflict of interest and political activity matters;
- partner with academic institutions, other levels of government and other ethics agencies to host a major conference on public sector ethics in fall 2016;
- continue to partner with the Office of the Integrity Commissioner to deliver orientation sessions to designated ethics executives and,
- offer its assistance to Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing should it proceed to update the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.*

Performance Measures

The COIC has established values to guide the delivery of the E.T.H.I.C.S mandate:

- **E**fficient: We maximize our resources to deliver quality services.
- **T**ransparent: Our procedures are accessible, easy to understand and open.
- **H**elpful: We support public servants to be non-partisan, professional, ethical and competent.
- **I**ndependent: Our determinations and advice are free from the control and influence of others.
- **C**onsistent: We treat people fairly but not necessarily the same.
- **S**trategic: We leverage our unique position of trust and responsibility within Ontario's ethical framework.

However, creating a culture of ethics in public institutions is more art than science. A robust performance measurement framework and system tailored to

Ontario's environment is now in place. Input, output and outcome measures have been identified and linked to the three key themes of efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction. Data sources have been identified and data is being collected on an ongoing basis and will be reported on more fully through the annual reports throughout the planning period.

As in the past, the COIC is required to adhere to the Ontario government's customer service standards for timeliness in responding to enquiries. Every effort is made to meet or exceed those targets. The customer service targets require the COIC to acknowledge all inquiries within five business days and provide a final response or request for additional information within 10 business days of the initial enquiry. If additional information is requested or a meeting required, a response must be provided within 10 business days of receiving the information.

Over the planning period, the COIC will strive to exceed the 90% target rate for acknowledging inquiries or holding the meeting and the 90% target for resolving cases within 10 business days of initial contact.

As required by policy, a mechanism, through the COIC website and general email inbox, is in place for "customers" to submit formal complaints about the service they receive from our office. This mechanism will be monitored and reported on in all annual reports.

Communication Plan

The COIC is integral to Ontario's ethical framework which includes laws, regulations, policies, institutions and oversight bodies. Over the planning period, the COIC will focus on broadening its reach and influence in order to create greater awareness of ethical conduct and the role of the commissioner in building a culture of ethics in the public service.

Some key communications activities in support of the above objective, include:

- Keeping the redesigned COIC website current and up-to-date so that as the primary communications vehicle it becomes a place that public servants and/or members of the public would visit and re-visit for information on conflict of interest and to learn about best practices

- Continuing a periodic commissioner's blog on conflict of interest issues that may be in the public consciousness and for which the commissioner's insights can be helpful in shaping the public discourse and understanding.

- Hosting and broadening the participation of ethics executives, and those who support them, in orientation sessions and other educational outreach activities as a means of contributing to the education and greater awareness of senior public servants.

- Partnering with other levels of government, academic institutions and other ethics agencies to plan and host a major conference on public sector ethics in the fall of 2016.

- Presenting to international/foreign delegations visiting Ontario about Ontario's ethical framework and conflict of interest regime.